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Textiles See Action

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Textiles See Action

AS CLOTHING rationing comes closer to reality, textiles approach the importance of metal and rubber supplies. Now that modern warfare has introduced parachutes, camouflage nets, barrage balloons, dirigibles and other articles of equipment which require fabrics, war needs come before those of civilians.

About 60 percent of the nation's current cotton goods output is going into military goods. This means that there has been a substantial diversion of certain apparel and household goods to sheeting and osnaburgs for agricultural bags, sandbags and other articles formerly made of jute burlap.

There is also a shortage of fabrics made of fine combed yarn such as twill, lawns, batistes, organdies and combed piques which use the longer staple cottons. These yarns are going into water-repellent poplins for military services, parachute harnesses, machine gun belts, summer uniforms and fine broadcloth service shirts. They are the yarns that are used for the sheer full-fashioned cotton hose and these military needs explain why there is not the supply of lisle stockings which had been hoped for.

It is impossible to realize the huge task with which the cotton industry is faced. One mill has been so pressed that it has installed the assembly line technique of the automobile industry. It is now making an army cot every 12 seconds, mattresses for the military services at the rate of 4,000 a day and a complete tent every hour.

In another mill, time is so precious that workers on an incoming shift file in behind operators on the previous shift. At a given signal they step forward and take over without one second lost or one machine stopped.

Wool is another strategic material. About three-fourths of the total mill output of 1942 was used for military requirements. A substantial stock pile has been built up to meet military, lend-lease and essential civilian needs. An army in action uses its supplies at a much greater rate than do civilians. In northern climates especially a huge supply is required to keep an army outfitted.

Rayon yarn started in active war duty in 1942, and in 1943 even greater quantities are being found in war uses. It is now seeing action in the forms of tires, targets, linings for uniforms, overcoats and sleeping bags, mustard-gas-proof slickers and mosquito nettings. One of the most important recent uses has been in making parachutes that carry bombs. Paratroops trust their lives to silk and nylon fabrics.

—Ann Mason